



Consumer Services Department

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## **CSD** *News Release*

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### **In preparation to prevent price gouging: Consumer Services Department completes price commodities survey**

The Consumer Services Department has completed a countywide survey of the prices of essential commodities, creating a baseline from which it will investigate price-gouging complaints and prosecute offenders, if a State of Emergency is declared anytime this hurricane season.

The 2001 Atlantic Hurricane Season began June 1 and will run until November 30.

While normally price controls are not permitted in the State of Florida, in the event of a state of emergency being declared by the Governor, the Mayor, the Board of County Commissioners, the County Manager, or the Director of the Miami-Dade Police Department, both state law and county ordinance prohibit price gouging.

The regulations ban retailers from charging unconscionable prices for essential goods or services. An "unconscionable price" is determined by comparing the price asked during an emergency, with what was charged for the same commodity during the preceding 30-day period.

The regulations cover categories of commodities such as food, medicines, personal hygiene products, chemicals, petroleum products, lumber and household supplies, as well as the provision of services and the rental of any equipment, dwelling unit or self-storage facility likely to be in increased demand in a period of emergency.

Some of the items whose average prices CSD enforcement officers documented during the survey were, food, ice, water, plywood, generators, flashlights, batteries, cleaning materials and pain relievers, among others.

During an emergency price gouging complaints can be made to CSD Consumer Hotline at (305) 375-3677, the Attorney General's hotline at (800) 646-0444, or to special price gouging hotlines which will be established.

Penalties for price gouging range from a fine of \$500 to imprisonment of up to 60 days, or both.

EDITORS: Please see attached CSD price gouging pamphlet.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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*The Miami Dade Consumer Services Department is an agency of Miami-Dade County government that protects consumers through complaint mediation, business regulation, and consumer education. The Department operates the Consumer Hotline (305) 375-3677, a central telephone number for consumer complaints and information.*